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REVERB

AFRICAN-AMERICAN A CAPELLA SINGING FROM WASHINGTON, DC



**Steve Langley (tenor, high tenor), Victor Pinkney (bass),
Chris Hunter (baritone), Troy Edler (tenor, baritone),
Kevin Owens (tenor, high tenor), Jason Deering (tenor, baritone)**



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TO THE PUBLIC**

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February 7, 2007
12 NOON - 1 PM
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REVERB

UPLIFTING A CAPELLA SINGING FROM WASHINGTON, DC

The African American gospel quartet tradition dates from the 1880s, when the Fisk Jubilee style was adapted for smaller groups, and many all-male quartet groups toured the country. After Dr. Thomas Andrew Dorsey popularized the expressive "gospel music" style in the 1930s, some Jubilee quartets moved to this style. By mid-century, "hard gospel" groups had adopted musical accompaniment, and former quartet singers formed the backbone of 1950s harmony and 1960s "Soul" recording groups. Gospel quartets never stopped singing, though, and are alive and well today. In fact, for over a century, urban Black culture has featured classic "quartet programs," Saturday night concerts featuring three or four groups. Although Reverb has sung at churches, the group has not yet participated in quartet programs (organizers take note!).

The origins of Reverb go back a few years, too. In 1990 a young community chorus sang unaccompanied (a cappella) Christmas songs to audiences at Lorton Prison and Washington senior centers. In January, the chorus was asked back to sing traditional selections for Martin Luther King's birthday. Two weeks later it was February, Black History Month, and they performed another round of concerts. Some of the singers just couldn't stop, and formed Reverb.

Since then, Reverb (accent the first syllable, please) has brought their unique vocal harmony as far as Africa, the Caribbean, and military bases in the Persian Gulf. This diversity of audiences has required a diverse repertoire, and group members who can draw on a variety of backgrounds, exchanging and blending styles as well as voices.

Steve Langley (tenor; high tenor), poet, playwright, and songwriter, once fronted a rhythm and blues/rock band at D.C. Space and other Washington venues.

Victor Pinkney (bass) first sang in his Brandywine, Maryland church choir at age 12, and toured Europe with America's Youth in Concert while in high school.

Chris Hunter (baritone), visual artist and founder of Amber Productions Art, sang with the H.D. Woodson Male Chorus. And grew up singing in the Greater Morning Star Pentecostal Church of the Apostolic Doctrine, and has toured the country with the Pastor's Choir.

Troy Edler (tenor; baritone), known as "Sol," experienced in R&B, jazz, funk, and contemporary gospel, was a background singer for recording artist Eric Roberson. A Washington Area Music Award nominee, Sol has shared stages or sung with Faith Evans, Brooke Valentine, Mint Condition, Leela James and Rahsaan Patterson, and recently released the solo CD, *Song of Solomon, Book I*.

Georgia native Kevin Owens (tenor; high tenor) performs with Afro Blue, Howard University's respected jazz vocal ensemble, and as a backup vocalist for R&B star Mya. An accomplished arranger, Kevin is instructor of piano and voice at the District of Columbia Music Center and accompanist at the National City Christian Church at Thomas Circle.

Jason Deering (tenor; baritone) first sang and played music at churches in Mt. Holly, NJ, and Petersburg, VA, sang with the Franklin High School Concert Choir, and currently studies jazz voice at Howard University. He has performed with the Howard Gospel

Choir, the Howard University Choir, and the JC Singers, a D.C. gospel ensemble, plays piano for two churches, and has directed many choirs.

Reverb worked with Washington gospel quartet trainer Sam Hubbard under the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program of the DC Commission on the Arts in 1992. "He taught us the basics of the quartet style," Says Steve Langley. "We sat in a circle and he sang each singer his part. We were just amazed because we would never harmonize that way. We'd grown up listening to modern gospel, and that wasn't arranged in the quartet style."

Reverb received Wammie Awards in 2005 and 1995 from the Washington Area Music Association as the best gospel/inspirational harmony group, and has been Artist in Residence at the Kennedy Center.

The Group's acclaimed CD *The Mission Statement* is available through CDBaby or group members. For further information on Reverb, please visit www.reverbmusic.com

Mike Licht,
Folklorist, Washington DC

Further Reading and Listening:

Allen, Ray. *Singing In the Spirit: African-American Sacred Quartets in New York City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991. ISBN: 0812230507; 0812213319; L3187 .A44 1991; 783.1/41825 20

Boyer, Horace Clarence. *How Sweet The Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel*. Washington, DC: Elliott & Clark, 1995. ISBN: 1880216191; ML3187 .B7 1995; 782.25/4/09 20

Heilbut, Anthony. *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Band Times - 25th Anniversary Edition*. : Limelight Editions. 1997 ISBN-10: 0879100346; ML3187 .H44 1985 783.7 19

Lornell, Kip. *Happy in the Service of the Lord: Afro-American Gospel Quartets in Memphis*, 2nd ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.

ISBN: 0870498770; ML3187 .L67 1995; 782.25/4/08996073076819 20
Zolten, Jerry. *Great God A'Mighty! The Dixie Hummingbirds: Celebrating the Rise of Soul Gospel Music*. Oxford University Press 2003. ISBN: 0195152727; ML394 .Z65 2003; 782.25/4/0922 B 21

Audio CDs

On the Battlefield - Great Gospel Quartets, Delmark
ASIN: B00006107E

Golden Age Gospel Quartets, Vol. 1 (1947-1954)
Specialty ASIN: B000000QO8

Golden Age Gospel Quartets, Vol. 2 (1954-1963)
Specialty ASIN: B000000QO9

The American Folklife Center was created by Congress in 1976 and placed at the Library of Congress to "preserve and present American Folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, public programs, and training. The Folklife Center includes the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world. Please visit our web site at <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>.

